

UTAH DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUP MEETING
May 7, 2007

Members Present: Marianne Johnstone, Judy Price, Lilas Park, Marilyn West, Representative for Stephanie Peterson, DeRae Preston, Robyn Brickey, Ann Larsen, Norma Bench, Jennifer Allred

Corrections Representatives: Jack Ford, Sandi Haslam, Colleen Gabbitas, Steve Caverly, Steve Turley

Special Guest / Speakers: Steve Turley, Steve Caverly

Welcome: Dale Wright

Minutes of Last Meeting: Approved

Agenda:

Dale Wright introduced himself to the group as temporary chair for the meeting. Craig Burr, Division Director of Programming, will conduct meetings on a regular basis. Annabelle Evans will retire as of the 15th of May. Steve Caverly was welcomed to the meeting and time was turned over to him.

Steve Turley-

Steve said he was in attendance at the FOCUS meeting because of his interest and concern in the types of issues discussed at this meeting. He has spent 17 years in Corrections, and gave a brief summary of his background experience. He expressed his belief in Programming and how he has seen it change the lives of inmates as he hears from those who have been released and become successful in the community. All community groups are needed in the effort to make the successful transition of inmates from prison to the outside world. Steve has an "open phone line policy," and gave his office number, 576-7451.

Steve Caverly, Health Programming Administrator

Steve introduced himself to the group by summarizing his educational background. He has a master's degree in social work and in 2004 received a second master's degree in gerontology.

Aging issues in the country as well as in the prison are becoming more and more prominent. Steve has researched the number and demographics of the older and mentally ill population. The issue of older offenders has higher public awareness in other states than we currently have in Utah. The numbers of this population will increase dramatically in the next 5 years. The number of inmates in the 55 years and older group will show an approximate 18-19% increase in that time period. The absolute numbers are not high at this point in time, but are rapidly increasing. The overall percentage of inmates in this age category at present is 6.2%. With the current rate of growth in inmate

population, that percentage will grow quickly. This will result in higher costs in medical care. The nation's larger states' costs have become huge. Utah spends about \$25,000 per year per regular inmate. The additional costs of incarcerating the older population has not yet been calculated. Funding has not kept pace because costs are not tied to the consumer price index, it is determined by the legislature. This year, 1.5 million has been appropriated in funds. Currently, 6% of the prison population utilizes 14-15% of funds.

Approximately 28% of the inmate population are sex offenders. Most older prisoners, whose numbers are increasing, are sex offenders. These people are serving sentences of 5 years to life. These longer prison sentences will require more funding. Utah has adopted indeterminate sentencing. Other states that do not have indeterminate sentencing have inmate populations, which are growing much faster.

Of the older prisoners, 27% are serving time for violent crimes which have resulted in a death, with sentences of first-degree felonies or life without parole. Inmates in the older age groups are not committing robberies or thefts, but more are sex offenders or violent criminals.

As we look at the older offenders, they break into several legal categories:

37% are on parole

49% are on probation; convicted of felony but do not remain in prison

7% convicted of class A misdemeanors

and those in the unsentenced category

If convicted of a sexual offense, a prisoner will likely get prison time because the community views sexual offenses as particularly grievous. This is manifested in the fact that only about 35% of sex offenders are released back into the community, while 60% remain in prison. Drugs and theft comprise only about 27% of older inmate crimes with alcohol being the major offending drug.

When an agency plan was submitted, three areas of concern and priority were identified:

- 1) Medical costs – We need increased funding for rising medical costs, particularly for specialized treatment such as U of U services.
- 2) We need to be funded by an indexed model; perhaps make specialty costs a separate item to put before the legislature. Discussion must be held on the cost effectiveness of different approaches.
- 3) Sex offender treatment – There are currently 1600-1700 sex offenders incarcerated. Only 120 are receiving treatment. The system in place is obviously not working. That is the reason the prison began contracting out for therapists. We need more treatment, more halfway houses and more beds for these offenders in the community.
- 4) We need a housing area inside the prison to be used as a care center for aging inmates with medical issues. Public outcry has increased pressure to establish such a facility. At the present time, there are only 2 parolees in nursing homes.

Laws make it difficult for nursing homes to accept prisoners as residents. A care center would provide cost effective, humane care with security.

The question was raised, “Where do the drugs come from that we treat patients with in prison?” The prison orders the drugs directly and they are supplied to the infirmary, generally generic brands if they are available.

In the case of serious illness, such as dementia, what services can be given to an inmate? Least-cost drugs are supplied, but the burden of 24-hour care is shared by inmate caregivers and staff. That is one of the reasons we need a care center facility for these people.

Utah’s fastest growing age group is the 85 years plus group. Utah also has the second longest life expectancy of any state in the nation. This forces us to address this rapidly increasing population proactively. That means that these services must be funded, not expenses that fall into the category of “out of hide” expenses.

Currently, care for long term patients is not being administered in the infirmary. There are no inmates in permanent residence there.

Miscellaneous questions were taken by Steve Caverly from the group.

Identify topics/goals for next meeting:

Suggestions for topics for the next FOCUS meeting were taken as follows:

- 1) Discussion of the process of level 3 grievances
- 2) Fees and fines levied as disciplinary measures by Colleen Gabbittas
- 3) Update on PREA

DeRae Preston requested an updated organizational chart as soon as the information is available.

It was decided that there was no longer a need for Mini-FOCUS meetings. If a need should arise in the future, discussion will be held on reinstating them. Colleen’s phone number is 576-7440.

Next Meeting:

The next FOCUS meeting will be held Monday, August 6, 2007 at 7:00 p.m. in the Region III Adult Probation & Parole office, 36 West Fremont Ave. (1100 South), Salt Lake City, Utah.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.